

TESTIMONY OF BRYNN HICKEY

APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE 2/23/2022

INCREASE FUNDING FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING CENTERS BY \$1 MILLION DOLLARS

My name is Brynn Hickey. I am a registered voter in Montville and the program director at Disabilities Network of Eastern CT, one of CT's five independent living centers. We serve New London County. I thank you for your support of the Independent Living Centers (ILCs) and we ask that you increase funding for the ILCs by \$1M dollars annually.

Since 2004 the Independent Living Centers have been flat funded at \$550,000. Annually the costs of running the center increases with no increase to the funding from the state. This has caused the Independent Living Center to reduce their catchment areas and staffing. In comparison, New York ILCs are state funded at \$335K each and in Massachusetts, \$645K each and in Connecticut they are funded at \$92K each, which includes money earmarked for deaf services specifically.

The Independent Living Center's only criteria and providing services is having a disability. We serve Connecticut citizens of all age groups. This makes our services easily accessible and efficient when they need to move quickly to provide supports to consumers. All of our services are free to our consumers and increasing our funding would ensure that services could remain free and efficient with enough staff to cover the case load.

Disabilities Network of Eastern Connecticut supports the Governor proposed increases in the non profit organization and we ask that the Independent Living Center funding is increased as well so that we can improve the service to people with disabilities in the community.

I urge you to increase the funding for the ILCs by \$1M dollars or more.

Brynn Hickey